

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON
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UNCLAS WELLINGTON 4753

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SWEL, OCLR, NZ
SUBJ: TORRENTIAL RAINS STRIKE WELLINGTON: HUTT VALLEY DISASTER AREA

SUMMARY: WELLINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA STRUCK BY 36 HOURS
TORRENTIAL DOWNPOUR DECEMBER 19 AND 20 RESULTING IN EXTENSIVE
FLOODING AND PROPERTY DAMAGE, PARTICULARLY IN HUTT VALLEY NORTH
OF CITY. PRELIMINARY DAMAGE ESTIMATES AT \$25-30 MILLION.
USCGC ICEBREAKER, BURTON ISLAND, RENDERED SIGNIFICANT
RELIEF ASSISTANCE. END SUMMARY.

1. MORE THAN ELEVEN INCHES RAIN FELL ON WELLINGTON DURING 36 HOUR
PERIOD DECEMBER 29 AND 20, INCLUDING EXCESS OF FIVE AND HALF
INCHES DURING SIX HOUR STRETCH MONDAY MORNING. RESULT WAS SEVERE
FLASH FLOODING, NUMEROUS MUD SLIDES, SEVERED TRANSPORTATION
AND COMMUNICATION LINKS AND EXTENSIVE PROPERTY DAMAGE IN HUTT
VALLEY SUBURBS NORTH OF CITY.

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2. WELLINGTON RESIDENTS SUFFERED ONLY INCONVENIENCE OF CURTAILED
BUS, RAIL AND COMMUTER TRAFFIC AS CITY CUT OFF FROM ALL POINTS
NORTH FOR SEVERAL HOURS DECEMBER 20. BUT IN HUTT VALLEY SUBURBS OF PE
TONE
AND TOKES VALLEY MUD SLIDES AND FLASH FLOODS SMASHED RESIDENTIAL

AND COMMERCIAL PROPERTY, TRAPPED PERSONS ON ROOF TOPS AND IN AUTOMOBILES AND ISOLATED SEVERAL DISTRICTS BY WIPING OUT HIGHWAY/RAIL LINKS.

3. AT PEAK OF CRITICAL PERIOD, USCGC BURTON ISLAND, IN PORT WELLINGTON ON WAY TO ANTARCTICA, EXTENDED OUTSTANDING ASSISTANCE TO POLICE AND CIVIL DEFENSE AUTHORITIES. BURTON ISLAND HELICOPTERS

PLUCKED STRANDED PERSONS FROM FLOODED AREAS, FLEW POLICE INTO ISLOATED LOCATIONS AND TRANSPORTED KEY GNZ OFFICIALS ON DAMAGE ASSESSMENT FLIGHTS. SHIP HAS ALSO MADE AVAILABLE BLOOD DONORS, EMERGENCY FOOD SERVICE AND CREW VOLUNTEERS TO ASSIST IN DIGGING OUT PROCESS.

4. LOSS TO HUMAN LIFE LIMITED TO TWO WITH SEVERAL SCORE ASSOCIATED INJURIES. NO AMERICANS REPORTED AMONG CASUALTIES.

5. MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS ADVISED LABATT DECEMBER 21 THAT PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PROPERTY DAMAGE LIKELY TO AMOUNT TO \$25-30 MILLION.

6. BY MIDDAY DEC. 22 RAINS HAVE RESUMED AND THREAT OF ADDITIONAL HEAVY DOWNPOUR INDICATES THERE WILL BE DELAY IN CLEAN-UP EFFORT. SELDEN

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